



PREPARED STATEMENT OF
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"Halfway to the 2010 Census: The Countdown and Components to a Successful Decennial Census"

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Good morning. On behalf of the U. S. Census Bureau, I want to thank Chairman Turner, Ranking Member Clay, and the Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census for the opportunity to provide the Congress with an update on our progress on the 2010 decennial program. I was pleased and heartened the Congress chose to recognize the vital relationship between federalism and the census. This relationship was established in the US Constitution in Article 1, Section 2, and the nation's first census was conducted in 1790, making the census one of the nation's oldest civic engagements. The Census Bureau is proud of and humbled by this tradition. Our efforts to reach every community, every neighborhood, every street, every household, and every person living in America honor this tradition, as they serve to extend the promise for the fair distribution of power and resources, and the recognition of the importance of the diversity of this nation.

I want to assure the committee, our primary goal is an accurate decennial census. In 2010, we will meet this goal through the reengineered census process — a process that will deliver more timely data, reduce overall risk, and contain costs. The reengineered 2010 decennial program comprises three integrated components: the American Community Survey, which will provide timely, accurate data for states, towns, and even neighborhoods; the Master Address File and TIGER Enhancement Program, which will serve our nation by updating and modernizing the maps by which we collect and disseminate census data; and the 2010 Census, a short-form only census, which includes a rigorous research and testing program.¹ Each component of the 2010 decennial census program is designed to promote the success of the other components, and to serve the constitutional requirement for an accurate census.

¹ Master Address File and TIGER (Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Reference) system. These combined programs constitute the "address list" and "road map" by which the census is conducted.

As we look forward, it is worth considering the context of the first census and the great and hopeful challenge accepted on our behalf by the framers in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787. This first census bears important meaning on every census. As we accept the challenge of counting every person in America in 2010, we are sustained by the knowledge that this challenge was foreseen and embraced at the beginning of our nation's history.

We know why an *actual enumeration* was chosen as the method for apportioning power within the House of Representatives. The enumeration was chosen as a means of systematically apportioning power and representation as the nation's population inevitably grew and changed. According to James Madison's diary, as the delegates debated the original distribution of power, George Mason spoke about the need to establish a procedure to justify power with the passage of time and to recognize a fundamental right of the people for fair representation. "He did not object to the conjectural ratio which was to prevail in the outset; but considered a Revision from time to time according to some permanent & precise standard as essential to [sic] fair representation as required in the 1st branch. According to the present population of America, the Northern part of it had a right to preponderate, and he would not deny it. But he wished it not to preponderate hereafter when the reason no longer continued."²

We also know what was intended for the census by the manner in which the first census was conducted. The instructions of the first census act are replete with the injunction that the marshals should record *every person* living in the United States. And, we know the rough, unmapped wilderness of the new nation did not deter them. The marshals not only went to Charleston, Philadelphia, and New York, but to the area "Between Norridge-Wock and Seven Mile Brook" in the territory of Maine, as well as the burgeoning communities on the western frontiers. The first census not only revealed the need to reapportion congress, it also revealed the true wealth of the nation: its people. The first census exposed the vast potential of a young nation, and helped open opportunities by illustrating the presence of new communities outside those original boundaries of the colonies.

Thus, with the experience of the first census, we acknowledge two abiding principles: the necessity to apportion fair representation in an ever-changing population, and the importance of recognition and inclusion for communities throughout this country. We have, in every census since, attempted to reach every person living in America, because the census is not only a national imperative, but also a valuable asset for every community.

There is an old adage, *knowledge is power* — and the census is an important source of knowledge and information. Census data empower citizens at every level and generate activity within the nation's social and economic spheres. Acknowledging this fact is a critical part of planning each census. We recognize the demands for high-quality data are ever increasing, and that in many instances only the census can satisfy these demands because it is the only consistent, comprehensive, detailed source of information for small communities and small geographies throughout the United States. With each census, we have a mandate to focus our efforts to meet the ever-changing challenge to reach every street and every household in America.

² James Madison, *The Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787 Which Framed the Constitution of the United States of America*, International Edition, ed. Gaillard Hunt and James Brown Scott (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1970) 231-232.

With each census, this challenge grows and changes. The 1990s witnessed unprecedented growth in the Latino community; an increasing reluctance to answer surveys; social changes affecting residency, such as two-residence households and increasingly complex custody arrangements; and an environment of changing technological capabilities. Each of these challenges and opportunities dramatically affected Census 2000. The 2000 Census, despite its success, was a high-risk endeavor. In fact, at this point in the last decade, the Census Bureau was pursuing a controversial plan that was ultimately overturned in the courts, and was just conducting the first major test for the census. The Census Bureau learned a great deal from the experience of Census 2000, as we do after every census. After each census, the Census Bureau conducts thorough and extensive evaluations, examining all aspects from planning and research to coverage measurement, from enumerator training to data quality, from data processing to data dissemination. As we plan the next census, we consider the lessons learned and assess new opportunities. Following the Census 2000, both the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the Commerce Inspector General strongly emphasized the need for increased planning and testing — something which the Census Bureau also acknowledged.

Today, I assure you, we understood the lessons of Census 2000, and we are working to take advantage of important technological and operational opportunities we missed in the past as well as exploring new opportunities. The 2010 decennial census reengineering process is intended to deliver a more accurate census. Moreover, if properly tested, it will also deliver more timely data and reduce overall risk. We believe this process will save taxpayer dollars relative to repeating the design and operation of the 2000 census, by allowing the Census Bureau to conduct early testing. Our goal is to capitalize on important technological advancements expected to save time and money while improving the accuracy of critical field operations. We intend to meet our goals, and at this juncture — approximately five years from Census Day — I am pleased to report we are on schedule and on budget, as we proceed with the American Community Survey, the MAF/TIGER Enhancement, and the 2010 Census.

The American Community Survey

With the American Community Survey, we are experiencing the greatest evolution in the decennial census in over 60 years. The American Community Survey replaces the long form of the census, an important and crucial step in realizing a short-form only census. With a three-million-household-sample every year, the American Community Survey will deliver data to governments with populations of 65,000 or more beginning next year. As the survey continues, we will publish long-form type data for places of 20,000 or more in 2008, and for all other areas, including census tracts, in 2010, and every year thereafter.

The American Community Survey, with the support of the Congress, was fully implemented this year. We began sending questionnaires throughout the country, increasing the sample to approximately 250,000 households per month. This makes the American Community Survey the largest continuous data collection activity at the Census Bureau, and one of the largest on-going surveys in the world. We are very pleased to report that because of Congress' support throughout the testing of the program, we have been able to keep up with the increased workload — a workload that has tripled (and in some instances quadrupled) in the case of field operations, as well as other activities such as the call centers. More importantly, the work proceeds on schedule and on budget, demonstrating the importance of a well-conceived and supported testing program.

The American Community Survey is an important evolution providing timely data for states and local communities, replacing the old system that delivered data once a decade. These data are required to carry out an array of Federal mandates. At the same time, the American Community Survey will allow the Census Bureau to focus its efforts in 2010 on the core, constitutional responsibility to conduct an accurate enumeration of every person living in America. However, this endeavor also depends on another component of the reengineered 2010 decennial census program: the MAF/TIGER Enhancement Program.

MAF/TIGER Enhancement Program

The census must fulfill two principal requirements: 1) count every person living in America, once and only once, and 2) count every person at the correct address. Each address corresponds to specific geographies: a census block, census tract, place, county, and state. Ensuring the accuracy of the addresses is the only guarantee for the fair distribution of power and resources, as they are distributed according to geographies — states, cities, towns, census tracts, and blocks. MAF/TIGER is the map for a successful census. It tells us where people are living, and not only furnishes us with a list of households to contact, but also provides a reasonable means of organizing our workload and the non-response follow-up operations. Moreover, the TIGER system — which is literally a national road map — is a national resource. It is used not only by the decennial census, but also for many other applications, both public and private. It is used by the USGS for the National Map; by commercial companies for products such as MapQuest; and by state, local, and tribal governments to improve local GIS files.

With the MAF/TIGER Enhancement Program, we are working with the private and public sectors to modernize and enhance the capabilities of the nation's road map. Important objectives of the enhancement program include realigning the TIGER map in order to take advantage of GPS capabilities, modernizing the processing system, and expanding geographic partnerships. We are working with the Harris Corporation to realign all the US counties by 2008, in time for field operations to conduct Pre-Census Address Canvassing Operations. We want field representatives to work with accurate maps. Since 2003, the Harris Corporation has completed the realignment for more than 1000 counties, with approximately 2300 to go. We are on schedule.

We want to modernize the MAF/TIGER processing system, replacing the homegrown system developed more than 25 years ago before the information and technology revolution, with a Commercial-Off-the-Shelf system. This will provide a more flexible integration with other operations, and a more customer-friendly product for other users. As we proceed, however, we are mindful that the TIGER system is a national resource; we are working on partnerships that will benefit all partners in the exchange of geospatial information. This means we are working with local governments, as well as other agencies and the private sector, to coordinate, improve, and modernize MAF/TIGER.

The 2010 Census

This is an extensive effort, and we believe it is the basis for an accurate census that will result in the fair distribution of power and resources. The decennial census enumeration is the foundation for the nation's data infrastructure; it is the principal denominator for our population statistics. Thanks to the American Community Survey, the 2010 Census will be a short-form only census, meaning we will focus our efforts on the quality of the count and census coverage. To ensure success, we are not only using lessons learned from the past, we are reaching forward to the future.

The Census Bureau began research and testing for the 2010 Census early in the decade — in fact, far earlier than for any previous census. The testing program began in 2003 with a national mailout test. We conducted a census test in 2004 in Queens Borough in New York City and in southwest Georgia, successfully utilizing new technologies and training enumerators in a short time to successfully make use of the handheld computer devices. We are conducting another national mailout test this year, focusing on improving the completeness and accuracy of reporting on the short form (particularly for the questions on Hispanic origin and race, as well as coverage improvements). We will conduct a second mailing, and for the first time, offer a bilingual questionnaire with English and Spanish integrated onto one form. In addition, we are closely examining the residency rules, and looking for better methods to ensure complete household coverage.

We believe these efforts will improve not only the accuracy of the responses, but also coverage. We will take these experiences and the research we have conducted thus far into the field in 2006, as we conduct census tests in Travis County, Texas and the Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota. We selected these sites because their characteristics will allow us to answer specific research questions and meet test objectives. One important goal of this testing program is to enable us to conduct a true dress rehearsal in 2008, so that we will be able to test the new operations and procedures collectively under census conditions. This is important because we will learn whether the procedures, many tested separately in different environments, will work together when they are used throughout the country. We only get one chance to take the census; without a true rehearsal, we may be forced to conduct untried procedures during the 2010 Census, increasing the risks associated with the census.

In conclusion, we believe reducing the risk associated with the census is an investment in the nation's future, and one worth making. Congress has supported this investment thus far, and we are asking for your continued support, as the 2010 decennial census program matures. Over the decade, Congress will authorize the distribution of more than two trillion taxpayer dollars based on census data. The cost of a reengineered census program is less than one-half of one percent of that amount. Moreover, the current Life Cycle indicates the reengineered census will provide overall cost savings, as compared to conducting a traditional census without the American Community Survey and the other enhancements. Support for the American Community Survey and MAF/TIGER does more than encourage the success of the census; these important resources will empower citizens at every level and generate activity throughout the nation's social and economic spheres. Supporting the ongoing and aggressive research program associated with the decennial census supports the accuracy of the count. The value of your support in this respect is incalculable, as the census forms the foundation of the nation's data infrastructure, and the data become the basis for both public and private decision-making throughout the nation. The census supports the hopes and ambitions of communities. The census provides information — factual evidence — that helps all branches of government, including state and local governments, as well as the private sector, to answer the needs of this country. It is one of our nation's most honorable and humbling traditions — it is the tradition that honors our nation's most vital asset, its people.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity, and I hope my testimony was informative. I would be happy to answer your questions and concerns.